

Washington, DC – Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted for the passage Friday of HR 5136, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2011, a sweeping bill that supports troops at home and protects them on the battle field.

“By supporting our military with additional pay, expanded healthcare coverage and assistance to families, this bill makes good on our promise to honor their service in a real way,” said Congressman Rodriguez, who serves on the House Veterans Affairs and Appropriations Committees. “HR 5136 bill sustains a 21st century military designed and prepared to handle the threats of a changing world and provides troops with the resources they need for their mission.”

The bill provides a 1.9 percent pay raise for troops – a larger increase than the President’s request. And it increases the maximum amount of hostile fire and imminent danger pay for the first time since 2004.

“Our troops deserve to be paid fairly for their immense sacrifices, which include their time, their skills, their willingness to be away from their families and the decision to risk their lives,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “It’s not enough to recognize their dedication on Memorial Day, July 4 and other days. We need to do that year-round, and this bill does that.”

The bill includes three major projects requested by Congressman Rodriguez:

- \$2.8 million for a Cyber Transition at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio
- \$10.8 million for a Community Event Complex at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio
- \$900,000 for Consolidated Security Forces Operations at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio

It also extends TRICARE coverage to cover dependent children up to age 26 and increases the

family separation allowance for our service members whose deployment or temporary duty requires them to live away from their families.

Other items included in the bill are:

- Expansion of college loan repayment benefits;
- The most comprehensive legislative package ever to address sexual assault in the military – including 28 provisions to implement into law many of the recommendations of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault;
- A pilot program to offer an alternative career path to military officers, providing a broader range of experiences over a longer career;
- A pilot program to help military spouses take advantage of their personal skill sets to identify and obtain desirable and portable careers;
- Authorizes an additional special one-time payment to seriously wounded service members to pay for the relocation costs of their caregivers.

In addition to these direct benefits at home, HR 5136 supports our troops in the field. There is funding to fix vulnerabilities in our force protection identified in the wake of the tragic shooting at Fort Hood and provides an account to allow commanders on the ground to cut through the red tape and get equipment they need immediately to protect troops.

It authorizes nearly \$3.5 billion to fully fund Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles and \$3.5 billion to develop better technologies for defeating IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices).

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